

FOOD SAFETY

PURPOSE: This operational guide is provided to assist all Air Force club personnel in lowering the risk of facing a food borne illness crisis.

SCOPE: This guide applies to all club personnel.

GENERAL: The Center for Disease Control reports that 9,000 deaths each year can be attributed to food-borne illness. The main culprits are in food service due to improperly trained employees and carelessness.

GUIDANCE: In order to avoid a crisis, managers must make time to teach, or re-teach all employees about the eight most common causes of food-borne illnesses and how they can be prevented.

1. **Improperly refrigerated foods:** Potentially hazardous food items such as meat, poultry, seafood and dairy products must be refrigerated at 40 degrees F or below. These food items should be prepped in small amounts and placed in the refrigerator immediately after they have been delivered or when employees are finished working with them. Guidelines require that potentially hazardous foods be cooled to at least 70 degrees F within two hours and to 40 degrees F within the next four hours. Casserole items should be stored in shallow, two-inch pans. Large roasts should be cut into smaller pieces prior to refrigeration. Record all refrigerator temperatures at the beginning, middle, and end of the day on a chart or locally devised form to minimize losses if the refrigerator breaks or loses coolant.

2. **Improperly cooked foods:** All foods must be cooked to a proper internal temperature before they are safe to serve. For example, the minimum internal temperature for rare roast beef is 145 degrees F. To avoid bacteria growth, the rare beef must be held at this temperature for three minutes before being served. Check with your Base Environmental Health Inspector to ensure compliance with local directives.

3. **Allowing foods to enter the temperature danger zone:** Reheat foods only once. All hot, potentially hazardous foods must be maintained at 140 degrees F or higher and all cold potentially hazardous food must be maintained at 40 degrees F or lower. If a hot item falls below 140 degrees F, it must be reheated to 165 degrees F within four hours before being returned to the steam table. Reheated food must be treated as leftovers and cannot be reheated again.

4. **Preparing foods too far in advance:** Schedule preparation of all food items as close to service time as possible. The risk of contamination increases when you prepare too far out as the items require longer storage times.

5. **Utilizing raw ingredients into foods that don't require further cooking:** One example is raw eggs in traditional Caesar Salad. Make necessary adjustments in all recipes.

6. **Allowing employees to use poor hygiene:** Employees must wash their hands and scrub underneath their nails at least 20 seconds before starting work, after using the restroom, after working with raw meat, fish, poultry, seafood, after handling a dirty rag and after handling money.

7. **Failure to reheat previously prepared foods to 165 degrees:** If a food item cannot be successfully reheated to 165 degrees F within two hours, then it can't be served.

8. **Cross contamination:** If an employee washes chicken in a sink and does not clean and sanitize the sink afterwards, cross contamination can occur. Proper cleaning and sanitizing of employee hands, equipment and utensils is imperative to lower the chances of contamination.

SUMMARY: With the information available on proper food handling guidelines, there is no excuse for any outbreaks of food borne illness within your operation. Properly training and retraining of employees is surest way to prevent outbreaks.